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The Change of the Name of the Russian Language in Russian from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii*: Did Politics Have Anything to Do with It?¹

Tomasz Kamusella
University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland UK

Abstract

During the 1830s and 1840s the official Russian name of the Russian language changed from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii*. Prior to this the names of the country and of its language were directly related (*Rossiia* – *Rossiiskii*), while today they remain disjointed (*Rossiia* vs *Russkii*). To date, researchers, both in Russia and abroad, seem not to have been interested in explaining either this change or the persisting discrepancy between the two terms. The article draws attention to this disjunction, contextualized against the background of various linguonyms and names of countries and regions closely connected to the history of Russia. The text does not identify a decisive answer to the deceptively simple-looking question that it investigates. Nevertheless, it proposes a hypothesis that the change might be connected to the anti-Russian uprising of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility (1830-1831) and the subsequent replacement of Polish by Russian as the official language in Russia's original zone of partition of Poland-Lithuania. The analysis may encourage other researchers to engage with this neglected, though quite crucial, question in an interdisciplinary and comparative manner.

Keywords: Grand Duchy of Lithuania, name of the Russian language, *Rossiiskii*, Russian history, *Russkii*

Introduction

My initial field of research was the interdisciplinary study of ethnicity and nationalism, which made me attuned to seemingly inconspicuous choices of names for such entities as nations, states and languages. After scratching the surface it often turns out that changes in the names of these entities are frequently dictated by various politically motivated maneuvers and (national) groups' needs, expressed on the political plane. While examples of this phenomenon abound in world history, a particularly clear instance is revealed by scrutinizing the emergence of the term

¹ I wrote this article when on a Foreign Visitor's Fellowship in the Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan. This fellowship accorded me the necessary time and freedom to conduct research, while the SRC's invaluable library and its understanding staff provided me with indispensable publications. I thank my friend, Michael O Gorman, for his invaluable help with my prose, and Michael Moser for his insightful comments, critiques, advice and suggestions for improvement. It goes without saying, though, that I alone am responsible for any error or infelicity that remains.

'Ukraine' as the name of a polity and the sobriquet 'Ukrainian' derived from it for the polity's nation and its national language.

Until the end of World War I few average Westerners would have heard of a 'Ukraine' in the modern meaning of this word.² The word achieved international currency in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) which led to the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922, with Ukraine as one of its ethnationally construed 'Soviet socialist republics.' In common Slavic *ukraina* literally means the 'edge of a country or land,' hence 'borderland.' In the 12th and 13th centuries Rus' chroniclers applied this term to various border regions and areas. In 1569 the personal union between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland was made into a real union, yielding a new polity by the name of the Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita* in Polish and *Rech' Pospolita* in Ruthenian, the Cyrillic-based official language in the Grand Duchy) of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the process of unification, the southern half of the Grand Duchy was transferred to Poland, and the largest chunk of this vast territory was organized as the Voivodeship (administrative region) of Kijów (Kyiv). At the turn of the 17th century it became popular to refer to this voivodeship as *Ukraina* (Ukraine), due to its distant and peripheral location vis-à-vis the kingdom's capital in the faraway west, first in Cracow, and after 1596 in Warsaw. Furthermore, the Kijów Voivodeship bordered on Poland-Lithuania's two main rivals for dominion over Eastern Europe, namely Muscovy (or the Russian Empire after 1721) to the east and the Ottoman Empire to the south. (cf Kołodziejczyk 1994)

In Muscovian (later, Russian) vocabulary this voivodeship was dubbed 'one of the lands of Rus'.' In the late 15th century Muscovy espoused 'gathering the lands of Rus' ' as its political and legitimizing program, thus claiming to be the sole rightful heir to the historical Rus' and to its political and cultural heritage. This amounted to a standing claim to those western Rus' lands of Poland-Lithuania that were located in the east and center of the Commonwealth. In the Polish political terminology of that time, *Ruś* (or *Ruthenia* in Latin) denoted the Rus' lands within the frontiers of the Kingdom of Poland. It was quite common to refer to the Kijów Voivodeship as *Ruś kijowska* (Kijów Rus'). In the mid-17th century, Slavophone and Orthodox Cossacks, initially under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, defied Poland-Lithuania by establishing their short-lived independent

² In two searches for books with the word 'Ukraine' in the title, conducted using the electronic catalog of the Library of Congress on 14 August 2011, the first search for the years 1800-1913 revealed six such publications, and the second search for the period 1914-1918, seven. In the former case 'Ukraine' actually featured in the subtitle in three of these six books, rather than in the main title; the place-name in these cases referred to a region in the former Poland-Lithuania, rather than to the territory today comprehended by the term 'Ukraine'.

polity of the Hetmanate.³ It strove for survival by veering between its powerful neighbors, the Commonwealth and Muscovy (and, sometimes, the Ottoman Empire, too). Finally, in 1667 the voivodeship was split between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania along the River Dniester, with the city of Kijów (now known as Kyiv) and its vicinity falling to the former, thus becoming Kiev.

In Muscovy, in accordance with the aforementioned state ideology of gathering the lands of Rus', the Hetmanate was known as *Malaia Rus'* (Little Rus'), the name being an early modern invention (as explained below). When the name of Muscovy was changed to the Russian Empire (*Rossiiskaia Imperiia*), *Malaia Rus'* became *Malaia Rossiia* or *Malorossiia* (both meaning 'Little Russia') as a result. Some institutions of the Hetmanate had survived within Muscovy in an autonomous Little Russia, before that autonomy was rescinded in 1764, and the region turned into an ordinary Russian *guberniia* or governorate (administrative region), named Little Russia. The name survived in administrative use until 1802, when the Governorate of Little Russia was split into the two governorates of Chernigov (Chernihiv) and Poltava. (Kohut 1988)

However, in Muscovian and Russian nomenclature the term 'Ukraine' did sometimes make an appearance for referring to Sloboda Ukraine (*Slobodskaia Ukraina*, or 'Free Ukraine'), centered on today's Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, and straddling the contemporary Ukrainian-Russian border. (cf Shafonskii 1775: 157) It extended east of the Hetmanate, and remained under Muscovian / Russian control. The local Cossacks enjoyed a degree of autonomy until 1765, when it was made into the Governorate of Sloboda Ukraine. In 1835 it was made into the Governorate of Kharkov (Kharkiv) and the term 'Ukraine' disappeared from Russian officialese. (Pirko 1991)

Another complication emerged in the late 18th century with the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth imposed by the Habsburgs, Prussia and Russia. The division was adjusted in favor of Russia in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Eventually, practically all the Rus' lands, previously in the possession of Poland-Lithuania found themselves within the frontiers of the Russian Empire. The only exception was the eastern half of the

³ And, again, the Hetmanate is a late 19th-century coinage introduced by historians sympathizing with the Ukrainian national cause. (cf Dragomanov 1876: 56) They derived the name from the leader of the Cossacks, whose position was that of Hetman. (In turn, originally that title was accorded to the two highest military commanders in the Commonwealth, one in the Kingdom of Poland and the other in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.) The polity's official name was the *Viys'ko Zaporoz'ke* (literally, the 'Zaporizhian Army [of the Cossacks]'), usually translated into English as the Zaporizhian Host. In his international dealings Khmelnytskyi spoke of his realm as the 'State of Rus'' (*Państwo Ruskie*) with the Poles or as the 'State of Russia' (*Hosudarstvo Rosiiskoe*) with Muscovy. (*Encyclopedia* 1988: 472; Okinshevych 1978: 113, 115)

Habsburgs' Crownland of Galicia.⁴ In Russia one officially spoke of Little Russia and Little Russians (*Malorossiiane, Malorossiitsy, Malorossiiantsy,* or *Malorossy*), who as a 'branch of the (Great) Russian' *narod* (people or nation) spoke their Little Russian (*Malorossiiskii* or *Malorosskii*) *narechie* (dialect or idiom) of the '(Great) Russian language.' (Sorokin 2001: 49) In Vienna, however, the inhabitants of eastern Galicia were referred to as *Ruthenen* (Ruthenians) and their language as *Ruthenisch* (Ruthenian).⁵ The terms were derived from Latin based on the Polish usage of *Rusini* for the people and *Ruski* or *Rusiński* for their language.⁶

The difference in names, emphasized by the political frontier between Little Russia and Galicia, was also consciously deepened on a confessional basis. St Petersburg abolished the Uniate Church in Little Russia (and elsewhere in the lands gained from Poland-Lithuania), thus making all the Slavic inhabitants there homogenously Orthodox. (Magocsi 2002: 113) On the other side of the border, Vienna strove for the opposite, and enhanced the status of the Uniate Church by renaming it 'Greek Catholic,' a sobriquet seen as more respectable.⁷ Hence, by the turn of the 20th century Vienna had officially differentiated between the Little Russians and the Ruthenians as separate peoples (though among these peoples themselves this distinction was not generally recognized or accepted). The German usage reflected this division, reserving the ethnonym *Ruthenen* for Greek Catholic Slavs in Galicia, with *Klein Russen* (Little Russians) being used for the Orthodox Slavs in Little Russia. (cf Ewers 1816: 510) Because Polish became the main language of administration and politics in

⁴ 'Galicia' was invented by Austria as its administrative response to the delicate question of how to organize and legitimize its seizure of part of Poland-Lithuania. Officially the territory was named *Regnum Galiciæ et Lodomeriæ* in Latin and the *Königreich Galizien und Lodomerien* in German, meaning the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. 'Galicia' and 'Lodomeria' in this name are Latinized forms of the names of the late medieval Rus' duchies of Halich (Halych) and Vladimir (Volodymyr) in Volhynia. Following the Mongolian invasions, the Halich remained the sole powerful (almost) independent Rus' duchy and managed to seize Volhynia from the Mongols. In 1245 the pope made it a kingdom (*Regnum Galiciæ et Lodomeriæ*) and eight years later crowned its ruler, Daniel (Danylo), the first-ever King of All Rus' (*Rex Rusiæ*). In the mid-14th century Poland annexed this kingdom in a piecemeal manner.

Importantly, the western half of Austria's Galicia with the former Polish capital of Cracow at its center never formed part of the medieval Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. Before the partitions it had been known as *Małopolska* or Lesser Poland; the extension of the name Galicia westward conveniently (for Vienna) eliminated the name of Poland. (Wolff 2010)

⁵ The German terms *Ruthenen* and *Ruthenisch* were proposed as official names in 1843 by the Greek Catholic Bishop Mykhailo Levits'kyi of the Przemyśl (Przemyśl) Eparchy, as the parallel German terms *Russinen* and *Russinisch* sounded too Russian. Vienna approved and adopted the bishop's proposal. (Kamusella 2008: 383)

⁶ Unlike English, in some languages the names of languages and nations do not begin with a capital letter; in this article, even when referring to them in these other languages, I employ the capital letter, for the convenience of the Anglophone reader.

⁷ Very often, the name 'Uniate' was seen as pejorative by those whom it denoted and also by Roman Catholics with whom Uniates had been joined by eponymous ecclesiastical unions.

Austro-Hungary's Galicia after 1869, the corresponding Polish terms of *Małorusini* and *Małorosjanie* (borrowed from Russian and German) appeared for the Little Russians. Following the tenets of the ideology of gathering the lands of Rus', St Petersburg saw Ruthenians as 'stray' Little Russians and treated both groups as little more than regional branches of the (Great) Russian nation (people). Beginning in the 1850s, many Ruthenians in Galicia concurred, marking the beginning of the Russophile movement in this crownland. (Himka 1999: 10-11, 51, 99-100, 138-148)

At the turn of the 20th century, leaders of the burgeoning Ukrainian national movement, drawing on ideas formulated in the first half of the 19th century, conceived of the Ruthenians and the Little Russians as people forming a single nation, perhaps divided by a political and confessional border, but nevertheless united by common history and heritage. To underwrite this proposed unity, a common name for both Ruthenians and Little Russians was proposed, 'Ukrainians,' while Little Russia and eastern Galicia together came to be known as 'Ukraine.' The Ukrainian national movement had come of age. (Hrushevs'kyi 1899; Magocsi 1996: 171-172; Ohienko 2001; Simpson 1951)

This change in name worked for the Ukrainians, unlike the case of the White Russians (or today's Belarusians). The traditional Polish-language ethnonym *Białorusini* (White Ruthenians) or its German counterpart *Weißruthenen* connected them either to the Commonwealth's Ruthenians or to Galicia's Ruthenians. On the other hand, in Russia, as in the case of the Little Russians, Belarusians were perceived to be a regional group of the (Great) Russian people (nation), and named adequately as *Belorossiianie* or *Belorusy* (White Russians). As a result, the traditional name of their land, *Belaia Rus'* (White Rus') in Russian was changed to *Belaia Rossiia* or *Belorussiia* (White Russia) in the 19th century. (Vasmer 1964: 149) The change was reflected very clearly in German usage: *Weißruthenen*, which had been an alternative form vis-à-vis *Weißrussen* (White Russians), became largely obsolete from the 1920s onwards. In the early 20th century it was proposed that the Belarusians could disentangle themselves from their putative ethnolinguistic commonality with the Russians by adopting for themselves a name clearly different from that of the Russians, as the Ukrainians had already done. The choice fell on the ethnonym 'Kryvichans' (*Kryvichi*, *Krivichi*), under which a medieval Slavic group from the territory of Belarus was known. (cf Lastoŭski 1924) This time the ploy did not work, even despite some effort to revive it after World War II. (cf Stankevich 1947)

In the heady days of the short-lived Ukrainian independence after World War I, the roles were reversed. The Ukrainians could name the Russians as they saw fit, and they did, sometimes referring to them as *Moskali*

(Muscovians) and to their language as *Moskovs'ka mova* (Muscovian).⁸ It was a revival of the Polish coinage *Moskale* (Muscovians) current in Poland-Lithuania, and as such was an ideological reply to the Russian coinage 'Little Russian,' which Ukrainians wanted to be replaced with 'Ukrainian' as the standard name for their language and nation. (Kamusella 2008: 177) In part, their wish was soon granted when, following the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1921), the Ukrainian lands were divided between Poland and the Soviet Union. The Soviet section became the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic with Ukrainian as its official language. But in the interwar period Ukrainians living in Poland continued to be referred to as *Rusini* (Ruthenians), despite their appeals to discontinue this widely disliked practice. (Those who favored this ethnonym either wanted to be recognized as Russians – so-called 'Russophiles' – or were predecessors of today's Rusyns.) As a result of World War II practically all the Ukrainian lands found themselves in Soviet Ukraine.

At that time in English the country was dubbed 'the Ukraine,' a direct loan from the German coinage *die Ukraina*.⁹ The definite article in front of the name indicated the persistence of the memory that the name was derived from the common noun 'borderland.' Only when Ukraine became an independent polity following the breakup of the Soviet Union (1991) was the definite article dropped in English usage, on the insistence of the Ukrainian authorities in the mid-1990s. Similarly, independent Belarus requested the international community to drop the forms Belorussia and White Russia, either transliterated or translated from the Russian term, in favor of the direct transliteration of the Belarusian-language name of the country, namely, *Belarus'*. Russian official usage conformed to this request, but the traditional term *Belorussiia* is heard more often in non-official circumstances in Russia than the preferred *Belarus'*. The situation is similar in Germany and Austria; diplomats speak of *Belarus*, but in other contexts the country is still *Weißrussland* (White Russia). Interestingly, in East Germany the Slavo-Germanic coinage of *Belorußland* (Belorussia) had previously been in general use.

What's Up in the Name of Russia?

In the depths of the early 2000s, when I began writing a book on language politics and nationalism in modern Central Europe, (Kamusella 2008) I noticed that the Russian name of the Russian language (*Russkii*) appears not to be derived from (or correlated with) the name of the

⁸ The Belarusians, who at the end of World War I found themselves torn between independence, Soviet Russia, Lithuania and Poland, then also referred to the Russian language as 'Muscovian'. (cf Haretski and Haretski 1920)

⁹ I thank Michael Moser for drawing my attention to this route of linguistic transfer, via German into English.

country (*Rossija*), which is almost a standard procedure elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (for instance, *Deutschland* – *Deutsch* for ‘Germany – German,’ *Latvija* – *Latviešu valoda* for ‘Latvia – Latvian,’ *Magyarország* – *Magyar nyelv* for ‘Hungary – Hungarian,’ *Polska* – *Polski* for ‘Poland – Polish,’ or *Shqipëria* – *Shqip* for ‘Albania – Albanian.’ This discrepancy is not visible to foreigners, as the usage became ‘regularized’ in languages other than Russian, for instance *Rusia* – *Rusishtja* (derived from *Russkii*) in Albanian, ‘Russia – Russian’ (derived from *Russkii*) in English, *Russland* (or until recently, *Rußland*) – *Russisch* (derived from *Russkii*) in German, *Oroszország* – *Orosz* (derived from *Russkii*) in Hungarian, *Krievija* – *Krievu valoda* (derived from the name of the northern Slavic group Kryvichans who bordered on the Latvian-speaking area in the past) in Latvian, or *Rosja* – *Rosyjski* (derived from *Rossiiskii*) in Polish.

But even with a minimal knowledge of Russian one cannot fail to notice that the Russian-language name of the Russians’ country, *Rossija*, cannot be directly derived from what they dub the Russian language, *Russkii*, or vice versa. Obviously, both terms come one way or another from Rus’. However, the latter term developed on the ground of the Cyrillic-based Church Slavonic language (which became secular Ruthenian in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Russo-Slavonic in Muscovy¹⁰). On the other hand, *Rossija* is Rus’ that first got filtered by the way of Byzantine Greek (the most prestigious language in the Orthodox world prior to the rise of the Russian Empire) as *Rhōssía* before entering Latin under the guise of *Rossia*. (Another Latin term, sometimes also used for referring to Russia, *Ruthenia*, comes directly from the name Rus’, and typically was employed to designate the Rus’ lands in Poland-Lithuania, *not* those in Muscovy.)

Today, in the Russian language ‘Russia’ is rendered *Rossija*, whereas the adjective Russian may be given in two different ways, either as *Rossiiskii* or as *Russkii*. The former one comes from *Rossija*, whereas the latter comes from Rus’. Although translated into English and other languages with the use of a single counterpart, for example, ‘Russian’ in English, Russian-speakers themselves tend to keep the semantic fields of the two Russian adjectives separate when referring to their state and language (in other cases there is a considerable overlap between *Rossiiskii* and *Russkii*). *Rossiiskii* refers to the state and its citizens (hence, usually irrespective of ethnicity), while *Russkii* refers to the Russian language and

¹⁰ Interestingly, Ruthenian-speakers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania spoke of the vernacular used in Muscovy as ‘Muscovian,’ while the Muscovians reciprocated, dubbing Ruthenian *Litovskii*, literally ‘Lithuanian,’ but obviously *not* meaning the Baltic language of Lithuanian, as officially employed in the Lithuania of today. After the 1569 transfer of the southern half of the Grand Duchy to the Kingdom of Poland, the term *Litovskii* began to denote the Ruthenian language of the new, smaller Grand Duchy, as employed in Wilno (Vilnius), while the new term *Volynskii* (Volhynian) emerged for referring to the Ruthenian of the Kijów (Kyiv) chancery. (Kamusella 2008: 152; Uspenskii 1987: 260-261; Danylenko 2006: 101)

the ethnolinguistically defined Russian nation that constitutes a subset of Russia's citizenry.

I was mystified by the discrepancies that clearly departed from the Central and Eastern European norm of deriving the name of a nation and its language from the name of the nation's country or the other way round. I tried to find information on this phenomenon by consulting the available standard encyclopedias and handbooks of Slavic languages, but to no avail. I extended my search to the bibliographies of Slavic grammars and dictionaries compiled by the renowned slavist, Edward Stankiewicz (1970, 1984). Soon it became apparent that in the titles of the majority of Russian dictionaries published between the mid-18th century (when this language was conceptualized and its standardization commenced) and the early 1830s, Russian was referred to as *Rossiiskii* (**not** *Russkii*, which is the standard usage nowadays).

How did it come about? Muscovy was merely one of a plethora of Rus' duchies. Initially, it was one of the smallest and most peripheral of these duchies and, compounding the improbability that it might become influential, the duchy was founded quite late, at the close of the 13th century. As a result of its entering into a personal union with the Duchy of Vladimir-Suzdal in 1328, Muscovy absorbed the other duchy and was as a consequence elevated to the rank of a grand duchy, aptly renamed the *Velikoe Kniazhestvo Moskovskoe* or *Magnus Ducatus Moscuensis* in Latin. The role of Muscovy grew in influence on several counts. First, it became the main intermediary between the Mongols and their other tributary Rus' duchies from the turn of the 14th century until 1480, when Mongolian control over most of the Rus' lands ended. Secondly, in 1325 the seat of the Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Rus' was moved to Moscow and in 1448 the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople agreed to appoint a local to the post, instead of a Greek ecclesiast, as the tradition had been previously.

Ivan III during his long rule (1462-1505) built on the economic strength and politico-religious legitimacy of Muscovy, tripling the territory of his realm. What is more, in 1472 he married a niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium,¹¹ and adopted its two-headed imperial eagle as a heraldic symbol for Muscovy. An ideology emerged that presented Moscow as the 'third and last Rome,' which, of course, in the eyes of Europe boosted and justified the grand duchy's prestige and its program of 'gathering the lands of Rus'' (though in reality this ideology had little impact on Muscovy's internal political life [Keenan 1994]). Having vanquished the other surviving Rus' duchies and also the neighboring successor states of

¹¹ 'Byzantines' referred to their state as *Romania* (country of the Romans) or *Basileia Romaion* (Roman Empire), *not* Byzantium. Byzantium or the Byzantine Empire are the 16th-century terms coined in the Holy Roman Empire almost a century after the fall of Constantinople. On the ideological plane it allowed for strengthening the claim of the 'Holy Empire' to Romanness, while denying it to the already extinct medieval Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople. (Fox 1996)

the Mongols (or, rather, those of the Golden Horde, that is, the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan¹²), the Grand Duchy of Lithuania remained Muscovy's main rival on account of the Grand Duchy's possession of the western Rus' lands. In recognition of the rise of Muscovy to the rank of a major regional power the polity was renamed as the *Tsar'stvo Ruskoe* (Tsardom, or Kingdom, of Russia). Also the Hellenized form *Rossiia* made an appearance in this kingdom's parallel name of *Tsarstvo Rossiiskoe*, while the abbreviated versions of the polity's name yielded *Rusiia*, *Rosiia* and *Rossiia*. (Bogatova 1997: 218; Kappeler 2001: 24; Strémooukhoff 1953; Vasmer 1971: 505, 520)

Finally, in 1721 Peter the Great, as part and parcel of his program of Westernization in an effort to make Russia a significant European power, changed the name of his country to *Rossiiskaia Imperiia* (Russian Empire). As is readily visible from the name, he settled for the Latinized form of the Greek name of Russia and the Latin term *imperium*, rather than sticking to the Slavic one of tsardom. The word 'tsardom' was relatively unknown in Central and Western Europe, where the language of international politics and scholarly discourse was Latin. As such this term could hardly add to the prestige of Russia in the eyes of the West. Many Orthodox hierarchs and rank-and-file popes (Orthodox priests) considered Latin to be the 'enemy language' or even 'the devil's language' of Catholicism. Peter sought to and was able to curb the influence of the Orthodox Church on the state in various ways. Among these was his imposition of a Latinate name on his realm.

Next to *Russkii* for the Russian language and nation / people, the parallel adjective of *Velikoruskii* was revived for solemn occasions in the late 1830s and it finally entered popular usage three decades later. (cf Dahl 1863-1866; Chernyshev and Barkhudarov 1951: 146; Noonan 1979) It revived the late medieval distinction which was made by Orthodox Greek-speaking hierarchs in Constantinople when talking about the lands of Rus'. They spoke of the Rus' lands in Poland-Lithuania as *Mikrà Rhōssía* (Rus' Minor, Little Rus') and to those outside the Commonwealth (thus, mainly in Muscovy) as *Megálē Rhōssía* (Rus' Major, Great Rus'). Obviously, with these terms the hierarchs did not comment on the territorial sizes of the two parts of Rus', which in any case fluctuated dramatically over the course of time. The more distinguished title of *Megálē* was accorded to the lands where Orthodoxy was the faith of the ruling monarchs, and reserved that of *Mikrà* for those Rus' lands where the Orthodox faithful lived under Catholic rulers. (Magocsi 1996: 68; Vasmer 1964: 289)

¹² It appears that apart from gathering the lands of Rus', Muscovy tacitly espoused a similar and parallel program of gathering the lands of the Golden Horde. The latter, however, was not trumpeted about, because it would have been next to impossible to utilize the essentially Islamic tradition of the Golden Horde for boosting the legitimization and status of Muscovian statehood in Christian Europe. (Kappeler 2001:52)

The distinction, besides being the ultimate origin of the term 'Little Russia' discussed above, also yielded the parallel coinage of *Velikorossiiia* (Great Russia) that had appeared already in the 16th century, conveniently merging the terms 'grand duchy' and *Rossia* for referring to Muscovy. (Uspenskii 1987: 284-285) In 1833, the newly appointed Russian Minister of Education, Sergei Uvarov, proposed that the unity of Russia (or the limiting of the centrifugal political forces that were then evident) should be secured by the espousal of the ideology of *pravoslavie* (Orthodoxy), *samoderzhavie* (autocracy) and *narodnost'* (nationality). (Riasanovsky 1959) Among other factors, this quest for unity and a degree of homogeneity in the empire's multiethnic and multiconfessional population gave rise to the aforementioned theory that the *Velikorossy* or Great Russians (equated with the Russian nation or people) were the direct descendants of the Rus' population. The groups of Little Russians and White Russians were 'unnaturally' separated from the Great Russians for four to five centuries by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, but after the partitions of Poland-Lithuania these two groups were reunited with the Great Russian *narod* within the Russian Empire, as regional or ethnographic groups of the Great Russians. (Grushevskii 1904) Likewise, with the publication of Vladimir Dahl's authoritative dictionary of the Russian language, *Tol'kovyi slovar zhivego velikoruskago iazyka* (1863-1866, The Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language), the concept of the Great Russian language made an appearance. (Curiously, the dictionary itself does not record the word *Velikoruskii* [cf Dahl 1903: 432]) In its scope, Little Russian and White Russian were perceived as *narechiia* (dialects or idioms) of Great Russian (that is, Russian). Like the existence of Little Russians and Great Russians, the persistence of the *narechiia* was also explained by the inclusion of half of the Rus' lands in Poland-Lithuania. The *narechiia* were seen as a disunifying blemish on the face of the Great Russian language and were slated for extinction or for confinement to folklore, which entailed their official banning from book and journal production in Russia from the 1860s to 1905. (Miller and Ostapchuk 2009; Rodkiewicz 1998: 192-212)

The concepts of a Great Russian language and a Great Russian *narod* persisted until the Bolshevik Revolution, not least thanks to the four editions of Dahl's dictionary between 1863 and 1914. Interestingly, it was the *Obshchestvo liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnostii* (Society of the Lovers of Russian Language and Culture), which published the first edition. 'Russian' in the society's name is rendered as *Rossiiskii* (**not** *Russkii*). In this way, the already obsolete term *Rossiiskii* for the Russian language met with the new official contender, *Velikoruskii*, in this edition of Dahl's dictionary.

Velikoruskii fell out of use in Soviet Russia, because the Bolsheviks, striving for a degree of legitimacy for their regime, reviled the imperial past by lambasting it with the label of 'Great Russian Chauvinism.' (Martin 2001: 7-8) But a degree of ambiguity remained, as they approved the publication of Dahl's dictionary in 1935 and 1955. The title in the former

edition was shortened to *Tolkovyĭ slovar* (The Explanatory Dictionary). The offending conclusion, *zhivego velikoruskago iazyka* (of the Great Russian Language) was initially dropped but returned in the 1955 edition, perhaps in recognition of the crucial role which the revived (Great) Russian nationalism had played in mobilizing the population for the war effort during World War II, known in Soviet and Russian historiography as the Great Patriotic War.

Question Marks

As remarked above, between the 1750s and 1830s the name of Russia (*Rossiia*) corresponded unambiguously to the name of the Russian language (*Rossiiskii*), as the norm is in the case of other states across Central and Eastern Europe. I do not know why the name of this language changed to *Russkii* and why it happened in the 1830s. Until 2007 I worked in one of Poland's best centers of Russian studies. I thought that colleagues more knowledgeable than I in the history of Russian and other Slavic languages would have readily provided an explanation. To my surprise no answers were forthcoming. It appeared that they either did not know or considered this issue unimportant. I was flabbergasted at first, because I believed that if, for instance, in the span of a decade it were decided to write about the 'Anglian' language instead of the English language, someone would definitely bat an eyelid, at least. Should I dare add to the name of the Polish language, *Polski*, a tiny diacritic above the letter [s], resulting in *Polśki*, it would be immediately detected and decried as grossly erroneous. Yet, in the change from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii* one letter was replaced by another ([o] by [u]) and three were dropped altogether (the first and second [i], and the third [s]), but thus far I have not managed to uncover any expression of surprise, let alone of dismay, at this occurrence, voiced by those concerned in the 1830s.

I looked for information on the change in encyclopedias and handbooks but to date I have not found a single line. Concerned that I might have checked in the wrong sources, in 2008, using a lull between terms in Trinity College in Dublin, I decided to enquire further afield. Acting upon the advice of the doyen of Polish historiography, Jerzy Tomaszewski, from the University of Warsaw, I approached the renowned Belarusian philologist, Adam Maldzis, who has written extensively on literary and linguistic relations in Belarus (or rather the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) from the 17th through 19th centuries. I wondered whether an ukase (decree) might have been issued that officially replaced *Rossiiskii* with *Russkii* as the name of the Russian language. He replied that despite his two decades of intensive research on the 19th century, he had never come across a trace of such a decree. Maldzis proposed that after the war against Napoleon (1812-1815), the Russian elite came to the conclusion that in the multiethnic empire a distinction should be drawn between the population at large (*Rossiiane*, cf *Rossiiskii*) and the polity's core nation of

Russians (*Russkie*, cf *Russkii*), and that the practice continues to this day, the first term denoting a Russian citizen, while the latter referred to an ethnic Russian. (Maldzis 2008a)

This conjecture appeared to me to be flawed because it identified the precipitating cause of the name change as a change in an elite Russian disposition occurring in the immediate post-Napoleonic period; it stood at odds with Stankiewicz's bibliographies indicating that the change began in the 1830s and was completed by the 1860s.

I also wrote to Aleksandr Dulichenko at the University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia, a renowned slavist, who had introduced the concept of the 'literary microlanguage' for research on small, often neglected and unrecognized Slavic languages employed for writing and printing books in ethnolinguistic borderlands. (1981) He came up with another explanation. According to him, first, at the turn of the 19th century people, and especially elites, began to distinguish clearly between Church Slavonic (or Russo-Slavonic, meaning the Russian redaction of Church Slavonic) and the Russian language (that is, the vernacular spoken by educated people). (Dulichenko 2008) It concurs with the equation of Mikhail Lomonosov's 'middle style' of Russian with present-day Russian itself, which was achieved by Nikolai Karamzin, Alexander Pushkin and other literati at the turn of the 19th century. (Shkliarevskii 1967: 146) In his mid-18th century tripartite scheme, Lomonosov's middle style mixed the vernacular (dialect) of Moscow with Church Slavonic, while he based the high style on Church Slavonic, which left the low style identical with the Moscow vernacular. (Bucseła 1963: 62)

Following the advice of another correspondent of mine, the slavist Janusz Rieger, from the University of Warsaw, (Rieger 2008a) I decided to follow the trail in the authoritative dictionaries of the Russian language. The first significant linguistic monument of the Westernization of Russia, initiated by Peter the Great, was the *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi* (Dictionary of the Rossiiskii Academy [of Sciences], 1789-1794), published during the reign of Catherine the Great and dedicated to her. Significantly, in its title this dictionary does not name the language whose lexicon it describes, (cf *Slovar'* 1789: title page) nor does it record the lexemes *Rossiiskii*, *Rus'* or *Russkii*. (cf *Slovar'* 1794: 166)

This cautious approach to the question of the name of the language is tacitly accounted for in the Foreword. The academicians write that they are compiling a dictionary of the Slavic-*Rossiiskii* language (*Slavenorossiiskii*), that is, of Lomonosov's high style. (*Slovar'* 1789: v) Next, they proceed to remark that Slavic-*Rossiiskii* is Slavic with an admixture of *Russkii* words, which is an apt description of the nature of the high style. (*Slovar'* 1789: vi) Later in their Foreword, they settle for *Rossiiskii* as the name of the language whose words they record. (*Slovar'* 1789: xii-xiii) It seems that the academicians were not entirely sure (or

disagreed) whether they were to focus on the high or middle style in this dictionary. But on the basis of their propositions, it seems fair to say that they tacitly labeled the high style *Slavic-Rossiiskii*, the middle style *Rossiiskii*, and the low style *Russkii*. Hence, *Slavic-Rossiiskii* meant Church Slavonic, *Rossiiskii* – Russian, and *Russkii* – the vernacular, or *prostaia mova* (Slavic *lingua rustica*). (Uspenskii 1987: 260-262, 272)

Slovar russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv (The Dictionary of the Russian Language of the 11th-18th Centuries, 1975-) notes that the coinage *Rusiia*, derived from *Rus'*, appeared in the 15th century and remained in the title of the rulers of Muscovy through the 17th century. (Bogatova 1997: 259) In the late 15th century the adjective *Rossiiskii* emerged, and in 1551 it was adopted in Muscovy's official name, the *Velikiia Rossiiskii derzhava Moskovskogo gosudarstva* (Great *Rossiiskii* State of Muscovy). Three years later this adjective yielded the noun *Rosiia* (sometimes also spelt as *Rossiia*) in the tsar's title, *Vseia Rosiia tsar' i velikii kniaz'* (Tsar and Grand Duke of All *Rus'* [or Russia]). (Bogatova 1997: 218)

The adjective *Russkii* initially referred to all the lands and inhabitants of *Rus'*. In 1674 it started to denote European Russia, that is, Muscovy, less its Siberian possessions east of the Urals. It appears that these mountains marked the farthest eastern frontier of Muscovy proper; the view of the elite (using our modern conceptualization) was that a merely colonial expansion of this polity was taking place beyond this line. In 1623-1624 the concept of '*Russkii* faith' (*Russkaiia vira*) was coined,¹³ which drew the line between the Orthodox '*Us*' and the non-Orthodox (mainly Muslim and Buddhist) '*Them*' in Muscovy. Both usages, I infer, contributed to the rise of *Russkii* as a referral to the ethnic Russians. (Bogatova 1997: 260)

The gap between *Russkii* and *Rossiiskii* was never very deep in the early modern period, because at that time it was bridged by intermediary forms which are not current (at least in standard Russian¹⁴) today. They included the following forms for the *Rus'* / Muscovian male, namely *Rossiianin*, *Rosiianin*, *Rusianin*, *Rusin*, *Rus*, *Ruski*, *Russkii*. (Bogatova 1997: 218, 260-261) A similar series can be extended between *Rus'* and *Rossiia*, namely, *Rus'*, *Rusiia*, *Rusa*, *Russa*, *Roseia*, *Rosiia*, *Rossiia*. (Vesmer 1971: 505, 520-521) And likewise, a similar net of words may be hung between the adjectives *Russkii* and *Rossiiskii*, that is, *Russkii*, *Rus'kii*, *Ruskii*, *Ruski*, *Roskii*, *Rosskii*, *Rosiiskii*, *Rossiiskii*. (Bogatova 1997: 218; Vesmer 1971: 505)

¹³ It appears that the term in its distinctive function (as the Ruthenian [Ukrainian] form of *vira* [cf *vera* in standard Russian] may indicate) stems from the opposition of Ruthenian faith (Orthodoxy) vs Polish faith (Catholicism) current in the Ruthenian territories of Poland-Lithuania from the turn of the 17th century. (I thank Michael Moser for this useful insight.)

¹⁴ Many of these forms are preserved in colloquial Russian. (cf Sorokoletov 2001: 268-271)

This plethora of forms and their varied and variously overlapping meanings are a testimony to the natural variability of a language¹⁵ before a standard form is imposed on it with authoritative dictionaries and grammars that constitute the normative basis for any printed matters in a standard language (in the Western meaning of this word) and for school textbooks published in it. (The popular educational system is mainly responsible for instilling this standard among the target population.) The observed variability in the case of Russian continued far longer than in the case of the main Western and Central European vernacular languages. The latter emerged as languages of administration, book production and, finally, education and academic pursuits, especially, in the wake of the Reformation (16th century) that decisively undermined Latin as the sole written language of the Western Christian world. On the other hand, among the Orthodox and Greek Catholic populations in the Rus' lands, or mainly in Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania, the commonality of mutual comprehension (underscored by the use of Church Slavonic among the literati) was preserved, thanks to the North Slavic dialect continuum (extending from the eastern borderlands of the Holy Roman Empire to Muscovy) and to the cultural and institutional commonality of Orthodox Christianity.¹⁶

But as evidenced by the titles of the Russian dictionaries recorded by Stankiewicz (1970, 1984), in the course of the standardization of Russian during the second half of the 18th century a consensus *was* reached. The state was dubbed *Rossia*, its population *Rossiiane* and the language *Rossiiskii*. This consensus began to unravel in the 1830s and 1840s, and was definitively broken by the 1850s. It was replaced with *Russkii* for the empire's population and the language, while the polity's name remained the same as before, *Rossia*. Furthermore, a complication in the shape of *Velikoruskii* arrived on the scene in the 1860s. The story can be readily gleaned from Tables 1 and 2.

I attempted to repeat Stankiewicz's research using the electronic catalog of the Russian State Library (Table 3), which yielded an even sharper temporal divide between *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii*, leading one to believe that this change was completed in the single decade of the 1820s (seemingly supporting the Maldzis conjecture). I attribute this apparent sharpness to the mechanical nature of such searches, which do not allow for as much nuance as would be possible for a researcher having access to the physical copies of the dictionaries concerned. In addition, the period covered in this article is split between two catalogs in the Russian State Library with the

¹⁵ Here 'a language' is an anachronistic shorthand for a dialectal basis, sometimes employed for writing and printing, of what (we can say retrospectively, with the privilege of hindsight) was to become a language later on.

¹⁶ On the liturgical and linguistic plane, this continuity was not breached by the rise of the Uniate (later, Greek Catholic) Churches, because they preserved the Slavic Orthodox (today known among Greek Catholics as 'Byzantine') rite, complete with its sacral language, Church Slavonic.

crucial year of 1830 as the cut-off date between them, which also warps the results. Hence, I believe that the picture emerging from Stankiewicz's data is closer to the reality. The last table (Table 4) wraps up the statistical musings by showing the uniform domination of *Russkii* for the name of the Russian language, after the de facto elimination of the linguonym *Velikoruskii* from official use following the Bolshevik Revolution, apart from the disparaging phrase 'Great Russian chauvinism' (*Velikoruskii shovinizm*) that Soviet propaganda often employed in the interwar period. (cf Stalin 1936: 173)

Table 1

Terms <i>Rossiiskii</i> and <i>Russkii</i> in the titles of the dictionaries of the Russian language published in 1700 – 1799		
<i>Rossiiskii</i>	<i>Russkii</i>	Total
43	3 (1717, 1731: form <i>Ruskii</i> , 1769)	46 dictionaries

(Stankiewicz 1984: 128-134)

Table 2

Terms <i>Rossiiskii</i> , <i>Russkii</i> and <i>Velikoruskii</i> in the titles of the dictionaries of the Russian language published in 1800 – 1869 (data after 1850 seem incomplete)				
Decades	<i>Rossiiskii</i>	<i>Russkii</i>	<i>Velikoruskii</i>	Subtotal
1800s	5	2	0	7
1810s	6	0	0	6
1820s	5	0	0	5
1830s	10	4	0	14
1840s	4	22	0	26
1850s	0	1	3	4
1860s	0	0	1	1
Total	30	29	4	63

(Stankiewicz 1984: 135-144)

Notes:

1. Only these titles taken into consideration, in the information on which the Russian original title was included, thus, allowing for deciding if the word *Russkii* or *Rossiiskii* was employed to refer to the Russian language.
2. In the case of multivolume publications, the date of the publication of the first volume is decisive for including a dictionary within a given decade.
3. Subsequent editions of a dictionary are treated as a single title.

Table 3

Terms <i>Rossiiskii</i> , <i>Russkii</i> and <i>Velikoruskii</i> in the titles of the dictionaries of the Russian language published in 1761 – 1899				
Decades	<i>Rossiiskii</i>	<i>Russkii</i>	<i>Velikoruskii</i>	Subtotal
1760s	1	0	0	1

1770s	3	0	0	3
1780s	6	0	0	6
1790s	14	0	0	14
1800s	10	0	0	10
1810s	9	0	0	9
1820s	2	4	0	6
1830s	0	8	0	8
1840s	0	20	0	20
1850s	0	12	0	12
1860s	0	17	1	18
1870s	0	37	2	39
1880s	0	40	1	41
1890s	0	75	0	75
Total	45	213	4	262

Sources and notes:

1. Search for the title term *slovar'* in the Russian State Library's electronic catalog of books published before 1830. Subsequently, only *slovar'* s with the term *Rossiiskii* on the frontispiece are taken into consideration; the search did not yield a single item with the term *Russkii* in the title.
2. Search for the title terms *Russkii* and *slovar'* in the Russian State Library's electronic catalog of books published after 1830.
3. Searches for title terms *Velikorususkii*, *Velikorususkii iazyk* and *Velikorususkogo iazyka* in the Russian State Library's electronic catalogs of books published before and after 1830.
4. All searches were conducted on 11 June 2011.

Table 4

Terms <i>Rossiiskii</i> and <i>Russkii</i> in the titles of the dictionaries of the Russian language published in 1901 – c 1965			
<i>Rossiiskii</i>	<i>Russkii</i>	<i>Velikorususkii</i>	Total
0	70	2 (1903-09, 1955)	72

(Stankiewicz and Worth 1970: 371-376)

The record presented above of the *Rossiiskii*-only consensus, as documented by dictionaries and bibliographies, followed by the two decades of confusion, from which the new *Russkii-Rossiiskii* consensus emerged (with the six decades of the *Velikorususkii* irritation), only reveals the changes. It does *not* explain why the changes occurred. The renowned Polish specialist in matters Russian and Soviet, Andrzej de Lazari from the University of Łódź referred me to his article on the current confusion and partial interchangeability in the use of the adjectives *Rossiiskii*, *Russkii*, *gosudrastvennyi* ('of the state'), *natsionalnyi* (national), or *narodnyi* ('people's,' and sometimes 'national,' as well) in post-Soviet Russia. (De Lazari 2002; Kola 2008)

It must be accepted that the seventy years of the existence of the Soviet Union did contribute to this confusion; its very name, reflecting its universalistic pretensions, included no term of geographical or ethnic specificity. (According to Marxism-Leninism the communist revolution was eventually to 'liberate' the whole globe.) Frequently conflicting policies pursued in the Soviet Union that veered from Russian nationalism to Soviet 'peopleism' or nationalism, and to encouraging ethnolinguistic nationalisms of various peoples on the polity's territory (*korenizatsiia*) were not conducive to terminological clarity. Perhaps such opacity and imprecision in the use of ethnic, national and state labels was a good approach to managing the multiethnic and polylingual population in a polity with the largest territory in the world. The maintenance of empires requires pragmatic muddling through. This knowledge has not been lost on the elite of the Russian Federation. In his speeches the first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, was fond of referring to Russia's citizenry as *Rossiiane* (**not** *Russkie*), while his successor, Vladimir Putin, prefers to refer to them as *grazhdane Rossii* (citizens of Russia) or *sootchestvenniki* (compatriots). The anxiety to avoid ethnic-specific labels (such as *Russkii*), in order not to alienate the ethnically non-Russian segments of the population (at least at the level of rhetoric), is palpable. (cf Khrustalev 2011; Putin 2003)

The use of the adjective *Rossiiskii* in the name of the Russian (that is, *Rossiiskii*) Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (which was the sole ethnically Russian political entity submerged in the non-national Soviet Union) might contribute to the current confusion. Perhaps it weakened the elevated position of the ethnonym-cum-linguonym *Russkii* whose dominance was unquestioned from the mid-19th century until 1917.

Soviet dictionaries proposed that *Rossiiskii* as the name of the Russian nation and language was an official but obsolete term, hence never really adopted by the population at large when it was current in officialese. (Felitsyna and Shmeleva 1961: 1472; Volin 1939: 1387) They concurred that the term *Rossiianin* for 'Russians' or 'Russian citizens'¹⁷ was obsolete, too. In turn, all the stakes were vested in *Russkii* as the name of the language, as the adjective for referring to the 'national customs and folklore' of the Russians, or as the ethnonym of the 'people' (*narod*) which was the 'constitutive population' of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and, due to its demographic dominance, of the Soviet Union as a whole. (Felitsyna and Shmeleva 1961: 1473, 1582) The dictionaries added that *Russkii* could refer either to Rus' or Russia, thus emphasizing the ideologically sought continuity between these two entities, which, in turn, lent more legitimacy and an improved historical pedigree to the Soviet Union. (Felitsyna and Shmeleva 1961: 1582)

¹⁷ In the Soviet Union, at the level of the state, there were obviously no Russian citizens, but Soviet ones.

Tacitly, the theory of the Great Russian nation / people (as consisting of Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians) and of the Great Russian language (that is, of Russian with its two dialectal branches of Belarusian and Ukrainian) continued unabated. Perhaps if the merger (*sliianie*) of the three 'East Slavic'¹⁸ peoples and their languages could have been effected, it would have been a sign that the ideologically prescribed merger of all the ethnic and national groups living in the Soviet Union into a classless and communist Soviet people / nation was achievable, too.

A Hypothesis Instead of an Explanation

Looking for answers to the *Rossiiskii* / *Russkii* dilemma, I chanced upon the opus magnum on Ukraine's share of the Polish-Lithuanian lands (or Volhynia, Podolia and the Kiev land) in the Russian Empire during the long 19th century, written by Daniel Beauvois, the famous French historian of Poland-Lithuania. (Beauvois 2005) In the monograph I found an interesting trace that appears to be of much relevance to the story of the change from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii* in the Russian name of the Russian language.

The basis of the legal system in most of the Polish-Lithuanian lands seized by Russia was the Lithuanian Statute, or in full, the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was written in the Grand Duchy's official language of Ruthenian (*Ruski*) and promulgated in 1529. It went through two more editions (1566, 1588) before achieving its final shape. Subsequently, it was translated into Latin and Polish. The Polish translation of 1614 became the legally binding one after Ruthenian was replaced with Polish as the Grand Duchy's official language in 1697. After the first partition of Poland-Lithuania (1772), a section of the Grand Duchy's territory found itself in Russia, which necessitated a Russian translation of the statute, hastily conducted from the Polish edition. Apparently, the Ruthenian-language original, known in Muscovy since the 1630s (at that time it was also translated into Muscovian), was not comprehensible enough to be deemed usable for legal and administrative practice; in any case, the Polish translation, rather than the original, had been legally binding since the turn of the 18th century. After the third and final partition of Poland-Lithuania, Polish remained the language of administration in Russia's zone of partition. An increasing volume of administrative and legal work,

¹⁸ I put the term 'East Slavic' in inverted commas, because I feel it is ideologically and politically charged, rather than the objective linguistic term that it purports to be. Within the North Slavic dialect continuum scholars and politicians tend to speak of 'West and East Slavic' peoples and languages, implying that there is a clear division between the two groups founded on linguistic differences. However, the border between them is actually one based on differences of script (the Latin alphabet vs Cyrillic) and on differences of religion (Catholicism and Protestantism vs Orthodoxy and Greek Catholicism), but is *not* a linguistic border. Between 1945 and 1991, this cultural-cum-confessional border closely coincided with the western frontier of the Soviet Union.

however, necessitated an exact and scholarly translation of the statute into Russian, which was published in a bilingual, Polish-Russian edition in 1811. Another, exclusively Polish-language, edition of this statute came off the press in 1819. (Beauvois 2005: 211-212)

The dominance of the Polish-speaking elite (nobility, land-owners, Catholic priests and literati) was hard to curb, as evidenced by the persisting use of Polish in the administration of the Kiev (Kyiv) region (which had been seized by Muscovy in 1667), despite the decree of 1797 prohibiting this practice. (Beauvois 2005: 212) In the early 19th century the plurality of all literate persons in Russia were literate in Polish, *not* Russian. At that time those literate in the latter language were spread thinly across the empire; their number appears to be only on a par with those literate in German, who were concentrated in the Russia's three small Baltic governorates of Courland, Livonia and Estland (or today's Latvia and Estonia). The University of Wilno (Vilnius) was then the largest university in the empire. Its medium of education was Polish, hence it produced graduates literate in this language. Russia's Polish-Lithuanian lands formed a relatively large area that was the best developed in the empire. The area's economic and social capital was indispensable for the ongoing effort to modernize (or rather, Westernize) Russia, and Polish language and culture were part and parcel of this capital, for a time at least. (Beauvois 1991; Johnson 1950: 63, 287; Kamusella 2008: 376)

Not that the cultural, economic and political dominance of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility or of the Polish language in Russia's section of the Polish-Lithuanian territories was liked in Russia; in that period there was no alternative to it. This nobility's 1830-1831 uprising against the tsar constituted a watershed. It offered the Russian government a reason to replace Polish with Russian in administration and education in Russia's zone of partition of Poland-Lithuania.¹⁹ On the other hand, there were already enough university graduates literate in Russian to replace Polish-speaking administrators, civil servants and school teachers. So the changes did not remain a dead letter, as had the decree of 1797, but nevertheless they required almost a decade to be implemented in full. The integration of the Polish-Lithuanian provinces (apart from the autonomous Congress Kingdom of Poland, which St Petersburg gained only in 1815) with the rest of Russia was completed in 1840, when standard Russian law replaced the Lithuanian Statute there. Symbolic of the process was the use of the assets and library holdings of the University of Wilno, liquidated in 1831, to found the Russian-medium University of Kiev (Kyiv) three years later. (Beauvois 2005: 212)

¹⁹ Polish remained the official language of the autonomous (Congress) Kingdom of Poland (*Tsarstvo Polskoe*) until another Polish-Lithuanian uprising against Russia (1863-1864). St Petersburg gained this kingdom in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna. It was composed from two-thirds of the lands of Napoleon's Polish-Lithuanian protectorate of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807-1815). In turn, this duchy had been created in 1807 from the lands which the Habsburgs and Prussia had gained in the third partition of Poland-Lithuania (1795).

At that time the traditional sobriquets of 'Lithuanian,' 'Little Russian' and 'White Russian,' alongside that of the 'Grand Duchy of Lithuania,' as officially or traditionally applied to Russia's Polish-Lithuanian provinces and governorates, disappeared from Russian administrative use and from publications. They were replaced with ethnically, geographically and culturally non-specific denotations derived from the cardinal points of the compass. It became common to speak of the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the 'North-Western Land' (*Severo-Zapadnyi krai*) and of the Ruthenian lands of the former Kingdom of Poland as the 'South-Western Land' (*Iugo-Zapadnyi krai*). The example was followed by scholars, who began to dub the White Russian dialects or language as 'West-Russkii' (*Zapadno-Russkii*) and their Little Russian counterparts as 'South-Russkii' (*Iuzhno-Russkii*). (cf Holovatski 1849; Karski 1893) This change was anachronistically extended backward in time, thus leading to the renaming of Ruthenian as 'West Russkii' (*Zapadnorusskii*).²⁰ (cf Karskii 1897) Hence, to the uninitiated, West-Russkii, South-Russkii and West Russkii appeared as mere varieties of (Great) Russian, well in step with the unifying policies proposed by Uvarov.

But it appears that the Lithuanian Statute did not disappear from legal use before being employed to lend a veneer of legitimacy to these very changes. In 1827 the newly-appointed Military Governor (*voennyi gubernator*) in Kiev,²¹ Piotr F Zheltukhin, reported to the tsar and his ministers on the poor command of the Russian language among the civil servants in his region, where Polish ruled the day. He noted that according to Article 37 in Part IV of the Lithuanian Statute, *Ruski* was the official language in the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He equated Ruthenian (*Ruski*) with *Russkii* (Russian), though at that time *Rossiiskii* was the preferred official label for the Russian language. However, due to the closeness in pronunciation and a small difference in spelling, the form *Russkii* lent itself better to such an equation. Then he drew the conclusion that on this legal basis Russian should replace Polish in the Governorate of Kiev as its official language. Zheltukhin's report was well received and the Minister of Justice, Dimitri Dolgorukov, in late 1827, requested the Senate (imperial government, parliament and judiciary rolled into one) to order the use of Russian in the concerned areas in accordance with the Lithuanian Statute. However, instead of Zheltukhin's term *Russkii* for Russian, Dolgorukov employed the then official linguonym *Rossiiskii*. Other

²⁰ Today, some Russian scholars make an effort to emphasize the past position of Ruthenian as a language in its own right by using the Latinate sobriquet 'Ruthenian' made into *Rutenskii* in Russian. (cf Ivanov 2005: 100) Otherwise, the anachronistic practice of referring to the language of Rus' and its successor states as *Derevnorusskii* (Early Russian) continues unabated in Russia, creating a specious teleological continuity between Rus'an (*Rus'ki*, known as 'Old East Slavic' in English) and the Russian language.

²¹ On a previous occasion I had mistakenly described Zheltukhin as the (civil) governor of the Governorate of Kyiv; I thank Daniel Beauvois for his clarification of the title of the post.

ministers, with Nicholas I's approval, concurred and proposed that the Senate should replace Polish with Russian and the Lithuanian Statute with ordinary Russian law not only in the Governorate of Kiev but in all the governorates where this statute still remained in force.²² (Beauvois 2005: 213-214; Beauvois 2010: 238-241)

In this way a conceptual, juridical and linguistic jump was made from *Ruski* to *Rossiiskii* via the intermediary form of *Russkii*. The civil servants perhaps knew about the translations of the Statute into Russian, and that its Ruthenian original was not employed in Russian official use, because its language was *not* Russian. On the other hand, many of them might not have cared about such fine distinctions, while the ideological and political needs of the day might well in any case have overridden such concerns, fortified by a widespread belief that *Ruski* was nothing more than a temporarily Polonized strain of Russian. Eventually, the attempt to replace Polish with Russian did not succeed in the late 1820s, but it did prepare the ground for a more successful effort in the wake of the 1830-1831 uprising.

How could these events contribute to the changing of the Russian name of the Russian language from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii*? The uprising brought about major changes in the administrative, ideological and political organization of, especially, the western borderlands of the Russian Empire. Uvarov provided a working ideology for such an overhaul, while Zheltukhin and his likes commenced the gradual supplanting of various languages in administrative use, education and public life in European Russia with Russian that continued until 1905, (a process that became known as 'Russification' among the concerned non-Russophone populations). However, the ethnically non-Russian (that is, Polish-Lithuanian) elite in the west of the Russian Empire was still too influential in the 1830s and too important as the source of social, technical and economic capital to be brushed aside. The utter alienation of this stratum

²² Elena Astafieva (Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen, L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris) proposes a different (though tentative) look at Zheltukhin's report. Perhaps, drawing on the Lithuanian Statute, Zheltukhin understood *Ruski* (or as he wrote, *Russkii*) to be the local written language, Ruthenian, that had fallen into abeyance after it had been replaced by Polish at the close of the 17th century, or he might also have identified *Ruski* with the Little Russian of Kiev as used in the early 19th century. If so, it was the initiative of Dologorukov himself to equate *Ruski/Russkii* with *Rossiiskii*, or the Russian language. In this view, both Zheltukhin and Dologorukov wanted to eliminate Polish from the administration of the Kiev Governorate as, by law and tradition, not belonging to the pattern of things there. They differed however in the way chosen to achieve this goal, the former referring to the past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or to the local vernacular, with the latter going straight for the language of St Petersburg. (I thank Elena for this valuable remark, which adds a nuance to the discussion.)

Beauvois (2011) disagrees with this view and maintains that in light of the available documents Zheltukhin's goal was the same as Dolgorukov's, to replace Polish with Russian, not with Little Russian, let alone with the defunct Ruthenian.

of society would have been too costly, so the changes had to be buttressed with a degree of legitimacy. (cf Beauvois 2005: 214)

The supplanting of *Rossiiskii* by *Russkii* in the name of the Russian language, in order to make the introduction of Russian in the Polish-Lithuanian lands appear to be in accordance with law, was a small price to be paid for deepening the unification of the empire without losing the modernization impetus. At that time the vast majority of ethnic Russians were illiterate and the narrow elite was entirely dependent on the tsar; (the Decembrist revolt of 1825 did not dent the regime much). The former would not protest because the issue of the change in the name of the Russian language was well beyond their more practically-oriented concerns with daily life. They tended to refer to their dialects simply as *mova* ('speech' or 'language' labeled by native scholars as *prostaia mova*, or 'simple folk's idiom'), which they might see as the opposite of the elevated and holy Slavonic language of the Orthodox Slavonic Scripture employed in their local village church and preserved on the printed page. On the other hand, the elite, consisting mostly of noblemen doubling as civil servants, followed the general consensus spearheaded by the Tsar's court, including this change in the name of the Russian language.²³

Maldzis (2008b) and Rieger (2008b) have tentatively expressed their interest in the hypothesis and found it probable. However, both remarked that it should be evaluated and discussed by a larger group of specialists in linguistics, historiography and literary studies, before a final conclusion was drawn. I hope that this article may open such a broader and interdisciplinary discussion that may provide a clearer and better substantiated answer to the question why the name of the Russian language changed from *Rossiiskii* to *Russkii* in the 1830s and 1840s.

Sapporo, June and August 2011

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²³ Revealingly, the Russian language as we know it today was decisively shaped only after the 1830s. It is estimated that the earlier period contributed one-third of the language's words, the later decades in the 19th century as many as the remaining two-thirds. (Shliarevskii 1967: 155) After the 1830s, when Russian had become the dominant medium of communication in the Russian Empire, the top-down imposition both of meanings on already extant words and of new coinages on existing phenomena must have become more difficult than it had been before.

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